N°. IV.

THE

THESPIAN MIRROR.

SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1806.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MR. COOPER.

THOMAS APTHORP COOPER was born about the year 1777, of reputable parents: His father was a surgeon, and acquired considerable property in the East under WARREN HASTING's Indian administration; but of the greater part, if not all of this, his widow and children were at his death, which was abroad, defrauded and left destitute. When nine years old, COOPER was taken, out of friendship to his family, and in some sort adopted by Mr. GODWIN, the well known author of the Essay on Political Justice, by whom he was educated and intended for a writer, and no doubt inducted into the visionary democratical sentiments of his instructor. He is, probably, one of the very few, who have been apprenticed to authorship; and as it is impossible to determine the bent, and much more so, the soundness and strength of a mind so young, it is somewhat remarkable that a man of GODWIN's understanding should train a boy to write books, before it was certain he could ever be induced to read them. What Mr. GODWIN's particular method of education was, we do not know; and though when his opinions are adverted to, it should seem it was not a system of restraint, yet when COOPER's readiness on most subjects is considered, with his negligent habits, for some years past, a belief cannot but be impressed, that the foundation laid, was of its kind, a good one.

Such a pupil, to such a master, must have been roused and delighted by the French revolution. COOPER was scarcely seventeen when his enthusiasm prompted him to relinquish the pen for the sword, and to seek a commission in the armies of the great Republic; the just sprouting sensitive, and uncertain laurels of the author were blasted—civic and mural crowns, ovations, "*sabres d'honneur*" were much more glittering, and accordingly, it was already determined that he should engage for the banners of liberty and confusion, when the war broke out between England and France, and clouded the brilliant prospects of military promotion and renown in the cause of liberty.—Then it was, he turned his attention to

the stage, and communicated his wishes to his benefactor; they were received with coldness and regret, and not till some time assented to, and then with decided disapprobation. His intention, however, being found invincible, Mr. HOLCROFT undertook to give him some preparatory lessons. When he was thought sufficiently prepared, many difficulties occurred, before a suitable place could be found for his first appearance; at last Mr. STEPHEN KEMBLE offered his auspices, and Edinburgh was concluded on. The writer of this sketch has heard Mr COOPER describe with great pleasantry, his first interview with the Scotch manager; he was at that time a raw country youth of seventeen. On his arrival in Edinburgh, little conscious of his appearance and incompetency, he waited on Mr. KEMBLE, made up in the extreme of rustic foppery, proud of his talents, and little doubting his success. When he mentioned his name and errand, Mr. KEMBLE's countenance changed from a polite smile to the stare of disappointment. COOPER had been prepared for young *Norval;* but he was obliged to exchange all his expected eclat for a few cold excuses from the manager, and the chagrin of seeing some nights after, his part filled by an old man, and a bad player. During the remainder of the season, he continued with STEPHEN KEMBLE without ever appearing. From Edinburgh he went with the company to Newcastle upon Tyne; here he lived as dependent, inactive and undistinguished as before, till, owing to the want of a proper person to fill the part of Malcolm in *Macbeth,* he was cast to that humble character—in so inferior a sphere did *he* begin to move, who is now become one of the brightest luminaries of the theatrical hemisphere. His *debut* was even less flattering than his reception from the manager had been. Till the last scene, he passed through tolerably well, but when he came to the lines which conclude the play,

> *" So thanks to all at once, and to each one*
> *Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone."*

after stretching out his hands and assuming the attitude and smile of thankfulness, slight embarrassment checked him, and he paused, still keeping his posture and look—the prompter made himself heard by every one, but the bewildered Malcolm, who still continued mute, every instant of his silence increasing tenfold his perplexity—Macduff whispered the words in his ear—Macbeth, who lay slaughtered at his feet, broke the bonds of death to assist his dumb successor—the prompter spoke almost to vociferation—Each Thane, dead or alive, joined his voice—but this was only " confusion worse confounded"—if he could have spoken, the amazed Prince might with great justice have said, " so thanks to all at once—but his utterance was gone" vox faucibus hæsit—a hiss presently broke out in the Pit; the clamour soon became general, and the curtain dropped amid a shout of universal disapprobation.

After this discomfiture, COOPER returned not a little humiliated to England. His friends, GODWIN and HOLCROFT, who were convinced that he possessed the requisites for a performer of eminence, sent him on a tour of improvement to the Provincial Theatres. They expected that he would thus acquire an acquaintance with the stage, and prepare himself for the Theatres of the metropolis. An evil genius seemed still to preside over his wanderings. He appeared to the managers in whose corps he was enlisted, as a raw recruit who possessed no talents for the profession. Characters of importance were considered utterly beyond his reach. Those of inferior rank he played without success, and he degenerated into a mere letter carrier. In this manner he murdered a few months, starving on a paltry salary, and then abandoning his irksome and degrading situation, travelled on foot to London.

(To be continued)

Original.

SOPHIA WOODBINE.

A Tale of Truth from the MSS. of a Lady.

(Continued from our last.)

The woman and her daughter were, of course, admitted; but I found them at once illiterate, quarrelsome, and in short, very troublesome companions. I now learned, from the whispers of the servants, that this woman, whose name was Alzira, was a kept-mistress of Harcourt's; and her daughter Clora, believing herself his legal child, treated me with a haughtiness which fixed my disgust. Now too was I first informed that the occasion of my late guardian's flight, was on account of her husband, under a strange infatuation, determining to support these persons.

Their company growing daily more intolerable, I at length found pretences to absent me from the mansion a few days, to visit some of my neighboring acquaintance. But judge my surprise, when on my return, I found Alzira in possession of my late situation: to which, on Harcourt's requesting me to accede, I willingly consented, hoping to find my situation less irksome and unpleasant.

I had now attained to my seventeenth year, and lovers began to flock around me....among which, the charming Albert, obtained my best affections: and I acknowledge that I looked forward with joy to the period which should unite

us. Having resumed my situation at Harcourt's, my Albert was permitted to visit me as my intended husband ; and, having promised him my hand, judge, if possible, my surprise, when sitting together one evening in the room with Harcourt, on requesting him to name our wedding day, he told me to retire to his room, whither he followed, and asked me *to be his!!!* Astonished beyond description, I could not at first give credit to my senses,...but producing incontrovertible proofs of his late wife's death, he again in stronger terms, implored me to be his wife and never more to leave him! urging that so long as he had been accustomed to my society, he could not be happy without me. Yet at the same time saying that if I did consent, he must insist on secrecy on account of Alzira and her daughter.

(To be Continued.)

The American Stage.

*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.....*Cicero.
The Imitation of Life...the Mirror of Manners...the Representation of Truth

THEATRICAL REGISTER.

" 'Tis with our judgments, as our watches....none
" Go just alike....but each believe his own.

THE entertainments of the New-York Theatre for the week last past, have been more than usually attractive: Venice Preserved, Macbeth, and Richard III, have in turn been presented to polite and numerous audiences. The support of the former (excepting Mr. Fennell's Jaffier) was not the best. Mr. Barrett attempted Pierre....but, after having seen Cooper in the character, his personation afforded us but little gratification. Mrs. Johnson was *herself* in Belvidera. Of the others " if we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men."

Mr. Fennell in *Macbeth*, speaking without prejudice, was throughout very excellent....his combat with Macduff was conducted with great propriety. Mrs. Barrett in Lady Macbeth (excepting the scene of the dream) was unsuccessful. His Macduff did Mr. Young considerable credit; he was particularly applauded in the last scene of the 4th act, where he is first advised of Macbeth's having murdered his wife and children. If it is possible, however, we should be

pleased to see this gentleman endeavour to correct his manner of speaking in his throat, which is a great disadvantage; We cannot believe that this is natural. He keeps his head, likewise, too much in motion, which has no pleasing effect.

One of the *murderers* appeared to be quite "ill at ease." Mr. Martin in Malcolm was very respectable. Mr. Shapter had a variety of parts:....King Duncan, Hecate, and the Apothecary!!! Though he was *Shapter* in all, he acquitted himself quite well.

TO THE BENEVOLENT.

Charity, like "Mercy, is not strain'd;
"It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
"Upon the place beneath."

AMONG the various classes of mankind on whom the misfortunes of life, may be said to have their greatest effect, that of the children of Thespis must be allowed to be one of the first. When an actor, whose health is impaired by the exercise of his profession, (which is not the most calculated to promote bodily strength) becomes unable to attend the Theatre for any length of time, he is left to support himself upon the generosity of his friends, or, if a stranger in the town, as is often the case, he is thrown upon the bounty of the manager. Dependencies of the slightest kind, and which a very flaw may shake to their foundation.

In other bodies we find charitable associations, formed to remedy evils of this nature; and the same plan might be adopted with propriety as regards the *corpus dramaticus*. A provident society for the relief of distressed, or disabled players, who have been brought into trouble by misfortune, might be attended with the most advantageous effects, and save many worthy characters from an untimely fate.

The formation of a company of benevolent persons, associated for this humane purpose, might be done with little trouble—a plan of operation might be as easily suggested—and a fund might be collected in a short time, which would answer all the purposes of such a society.—A benefit at the Theatre for a purpose like this, would without doubt be universally attended.

Had we room, as we have the desire, to enter more fully upon an explanation of the project, we might add much more in its favor—It is however to be hoped that some gen-

erous and humanely disposed reader may coincide with the plan, and bring it forward to public notice and support—and whenever this shall be the case, he may be assured of the utmost support, and assistance in his power, from.

BENEVOLUS.

New-York, January, 1806.

THEATRICAL SCRAPS.

WE see by the Charleston papers, that Mr. JONES is highly praised in the first walks of the Drama. He has performed *Hamlet*, *Richard*, and a number of characters of that description with great approbation. Mr. BATES, Mr. WILSON, Mrs. WHITLOCK, Mrs. OLDMIXON, *&c. &c.* are likewise in that City.

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MR. COOPER has performed *Coriolanus* a number of times in Boston, with great applause. It is believed that his engagement will be highly profitable to the Manager of that Theatre, who now has the best Company on the Continent.

—

WE have seen Mr. & Mrs. WOODHAM and Mr. BRAY (late from England) much spoken of in the Philadelphia prints. A new work, of unusual merit, entitled "*The Theatrical Censor*," and published in that City, speaks very highly of their abilities.

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WE see by the London papers, that Miss MUDIE, the celebrated *Roscia*, was hissed off the boards of Drury-Lane, on her debut in the *Country Girl*. Master BETTY is re-engaged in London.

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To the perseverance and industry of Mr. LONGWORH, our Republic is indebted for a choice and elegantly printed collection of Plays, adapted to the American Stage. His Dramatic Repository, at the Shakspeare Gallery, 15 Park, can boast a better and more extensive assortment of theatrical performances than any other of the sort in the United States. Every new play, as they appear, may be had at this place.

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MR. DUNLAP, the celebrated American Dramatist, is about publishing a general collection of his plays. They have been, as yet, greatly encouraged.

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MR. FENNELL leaves this place, to perform nine nights in Philadelphia. It is whispered that Mr. COOPER will visit New-York, after his engagement ceases (in March) in Boston

Poetry.

The following lines were written to be spoken at the benefit night of the Miss Hodgkinsons: the managers had been provided before from another quarter. The merits of this piece sufficiently justify its insertion here.

WHEN polished talents meet an early doom,
And beauty sinks untimely to the tomb,
The muses haste the tuneful meed to pay,
And crowned with cypress form the elegiac lay;
With pensive mien surround the silent urn
And mourn, though conscious 'tis in vain to mourn—
No fancy'd griefs now wake the impassion'd sigh,
No woe fictitious swells the streaming eye;
For pity here two hapless orphans sue,
And raise their little hands with hope to you.
No mother's soothing voice allays their fears,
No father's cheering accent checks their tears—
Bereft of both, to you they gladly turn,
And hope to find those friends whose loss they mourn.
Ah! think how oft their father's magic powers,
Have sooth'd your cares and wing'd the lingering hours;
Think with what transport you've delighted hung,
On the enchantment of their mother's tongue—
Mute is that tongue! those powers to please are o'er!
They'll charm the eye—delight the ear no more!
But while you mourn the parents' early fate,
With pity view their children's orphan state;
Raise them from earth, their infant steps sustain,
Remove the pangs of poverty and pain.
Cheered by your favors—by your bounty fed,
Their opening talents to perfection led,
May rise to grace these boards, so often grac'd,
By beauty, merit, elegance and taste;
By you sustain'd, in worth, in charms they'll rise,
And future Hodgkinsons shall bless your eyes.

On the rival Lears of the same performers, the two following were written.

THE town has found out different ways,
To praise the different Lears;
To Barry they give loud huzzas,
To Garrick—only tears.

ANOTHER.

A king! Ay, ev'ry inch a king!
Such Barry doth appear:
But Garrick's quite a different thing—
He's ev'ry inch King Lear.

Dramatic Anecdotes.

Barry the actor, who died at the beginning of 1779, and whose name well deserves to be preserved, was perhaps in no part so excellent as in that of Romeo; for which he was particularly fitted, by a superiority of demeanor, an uncommonly handsome and commanding person, and a silver-toned voice. At the time that he attracted the town to Covent Garden, by his excellent performance of this part, Garrick found it absolutely necessary to divide the attention of the public, by performing himself at Drury-Lane. He wanted the natural advantages of Barry, and, great as he was, would perhaps have willingly avoided such a contention. This at least seems to have been a prevailing opinion; for, in the garden scene, when Juliet in soliloquy exclaims—

"*Oh, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?*"

an auditor archly replied aloud—*Because Barry is gone to the other house.*

During the run of the comic opera of Cymon, when Mr. Vernon was in pursuit of his supposed mistress Silvia, and came on singing

Torn from me, torn from me, which way did they take her?

A wag in the pit replied in time and tune

They're gone to Long Acre! They're gone to Long Acre.

The house was in a roar of laughter; and Vernon with great presence of mind, as soon as there was silence, sang

Oh, ho, are they so; I shall soon overtake her.

Corneille wrote a tragedy called Andromeda, with machinery, to divert Lewis XIV. when a boy. The decorations were so grand that they were engraved. The piece was revived in 1682 with great success, and with the addition of a living horse to represent Pegasus. This horse played his part admirably, and pranced as much in the air as he could have done on terra firma. The Italians have often brought on living horses in their grand operas, but bound with such precaution as to produce little effect. Other means were taken in the tragedy of Andromeda to give the horse a warlike ardor: before being hoisted by machinery up in the air, he was kept fasting so long that his appetite was extreme, and when he appeared a groom behind the scenes stood shaking oats in a sieve. Pressed by hunger the horse neighed, pawed with his feet, and perfectly answered the end designed. By this means the piece had a great run, for every body was eager to visit the famed quadruped Roscius.

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